

THE ZERO WASTE MASTERPLAN

COMPANION GUIDE FOR ORGANIZERS



GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR INCINERATOR ALTERNATIVES (GAIA)

This guide is intended to help organizers mobilize around the Zero Waste Masterplan to advance zero waste campaigns in their communities. Working on a zero waste campaign can be daunting: we're going up against some powerful forces and it involves imagining a future none of us have experienced yet. However, the grassroots movement for zero waste is already in motion. GAIA members across the U.S. (and around the world) are mobilizing their communities and allies to fight incinerators and build zero waste systems. While much depends on your circumstances, needs, and capacity of your particular community, you won't need to completely reinvent the wheel.

The Zero Waste Masterplan will help you and local decision makers:

- **understand what is and is not zero waste;**
- **get you through the nuts and bolts of developing a zero waste plan; and**
- **explain a menu of common-sense implementation options that are grounded in environmental justice.**

This companion guide contains sample outreach tactics and agendas for zero waste community meetings; guidance on developing relationships with unions and local government representatives; and tips for building coalitions and campaign strategy.

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WHY IS ZERO WASTE A JUSTICE ISSUE?

A just transition from an economy of extraction to one of regeneration in alignment with the basic principles of ecology requires Zero Waste. We must end the incessant, violent removal of raw materials from the earth and revive a culture of respect for what the earth provides; we must reject dumping and burning and instead, re-embrace reuse and repair. Waste is a justice issue. Low-income communities, communities of color, and workers are disproportionately impacted by the toxic pollution and climate impacts of landfilling and incineration. They're also disproportionately harmed by the extractive processes required to produce those materials in the first place. For those of us in the United States, zero waste means standing in solidarity with citizens of the Global South whose environment and well-being are threatened by resource extraction and waste dumping fueled by western demand. Communities all around the world - from San Francisco, California, to Tacloban, Philippines, to Ljubljana, Slovenia - are embracing zero waste as a way to create dignified jobs, reduce emissions, replenish the soil, and create healthy living environments.



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BUILDING EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY-GUIDED PUBLIC PROCESSES

Forming a strong process to involve those affected by an issue in the development and implementation of solutions isn't just the right thing to do - it's the smart thing to do. Simply put, meaningful and consistent engagement with a diverse range of community stakeholders leverages the unique knowledge, skills, networks, and leadership of community members to strengthen municipal programs and policies.

CASE STUDY

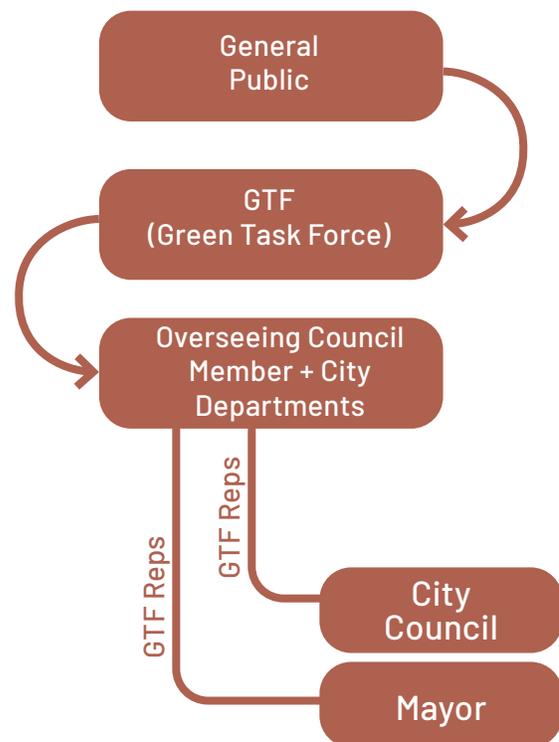
DETROIT'S GREEN TASK FORCE

Detroit's Green Task Force is a citizen advisory group authorized by the Detroit City Council to create and advocate for policies to build a green, resilient city. The Task Force is comprised of seven committees, including committees on Composting as well as Recycling and Waste Reduction. Committees seek information from the City about environmental issues, review policy and program implementation, and provide feedback and insights to support decision-making.

Monthly Task Force meetings are open to the public, and participants come from a variety of backgrounds, including public officials representing various agencies and levels of government, sustainability advocates, waste management industry practitioners, urban farmers, representatives from local universities, public utilities, businesses, community activists, and local residents. Task Force members view each other as qualified

experts in their respective fields, recognizing that different types of knowledge is valuable to understanding the full dimensions of an issue, and that the most effective solutions come forth from diverse stakeholders. Each committee is made up of two or three co-chairs and a core group of individuals who set the group's priorities and implement its projects.

The Green Task Force works closely with departments and policymakers throughout the City of Detroit and reports to the local elected official responsible for overseeing the group, who takes the Task Force's proposals to the City Council and/or the Mayor for consideration and adoption.



KT Andresky, a core member of the Organics Recycling committee and campaigner with Breathe Free Detroit, believes the Green Task Force is a strong stakeholder engagement model. It shifts decision-making from a single administrative focus to include the broader Detroit community, bringing multiple voices to the table. Crucially, there are clear pathways for the Green Task Force's recommendations to reach the City of Detroit's legislative and executive branches, which have considered the group's input substantive and valuable.

CASE STUDY

LOS ANGELES ALLIANCE FOR A NEW ECONOMY

The most successful planning efforts involve a broad coalition of stakeholders. When advocating for zero waste in the City of Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE) engaged labor leaders, environmentalists, and faith organizations.

The coalition spearheaded by LAANE was successful in advocating for a new approach to recycling and compost collection for multifamily complexes and commercial businesses in Los Angeles. Prior to the implementation of recycLA, 150 haulers provided trash collection to multifamily and commercial customers in the city, recycling collection was haphazard, and compost collection was non-existent. With the implementation of recycLA, the city now has a universal collection of recycling and compost for all businesses and apartment dwellers. Through its advocacy, the coalition pushed for collection agreements to include a "labor peace" provision that encourages union wages and benefits, ensuring that zero waste also served the purpose of creating good, green jobs - a win-win.

Examples of key community stakeholders for outreach:

- Restaurants and restaurant associations
- Community gardens
- Environmental organizations
- Labor unions
- Schools and universities
- Faith groups
- Neighborhood associations
- Community-based organizations
- Youth organizations



When we met with City Council members to advocate for zero waste, we always made sure to bring a Teamster, a Sierra Club rep, and either a priest or a rabbi.

Greg Good, Director, Don't Waste LA Project, Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy

RECRUITING COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO YOUR ZERO WASTE CAMPAIGN

Campaigns are strongest when a diverse group of community members come together around a shared demand. Below, you'll find some approaches and tools for securing involvement from your community in a zero waste campaign.

COLLECTIVE ACTION		PURPOSE	
TYPE OF ACTION	<p>Gathering your community to participate in a public action together (e.g. a rally) to support the kickoff of your zero waste campaign.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce new people to zero waste and the organizations/individuals working on it. • Get new people involved with your campaign - if your group has existing members, reinforce their involvement. • Collect contact information. • Create buzz around zero waste and your new campaign.
	COMMUNITY SURVEY		
	<p>Administering a short questionnaire about zero waste in your community. This can be done by going door-to-door, canvassing public areas, or by distributing it digitally.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better understand local zero waste needs and infrastructure. • Learn more about your community's understanding of zero waste. • Get people thinking about zero waste and how waste affects their day-to-day lives. • Collect new contact information. 	
MOBILIZING MEETING			
<p>Hosting a small, informal meeting with people that were referred to your campaign through current members.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build community around your campaign and make initial connections with interested community members. • Educate community members on zero waste frameworks. • Discuss community needs and assets to contextualize the above. • Have people commit to being involved. • Collect contact information. 		

TEACH-IN		PURPOSE
TYPE OF ACTION	Facilitating a training about zero waste. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate community members on zero waste policies and frameworks. • Discuss personal experiences around waste issues to contextualize the above. • Invite participation from other local organizations, such as community service or faith groups. 	
	TOXICS AND TREASURES TOUR	
	Leading a zero waste tour of a community, highlighting both toxic waste management facilities and community-building zero waste “treasures.” Partner with an environmental justice or community-based organization if the group building the campaign comes from outside that community. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicitly connect the everyday landscape of your community to your zero waste campaign. 	

DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY SURVEY

A community survey helps a campaign collect contact information, get people thinking about an issue, and understand what people already think about an issue within their community. Here are some tips for developing a community survey:

1. Choose what information you want to learn from the survey (beyond participant’s contact information). Do you want to better understand access to recycling/composting services and how people use them? Gauge perception of - and interest in learning more about - zero waste? Identify what about their community they are proud of? Learn about their top priorities for community development?
2. Identify who you are targeting. Will the survey focus on youth? Residents of a strategic part of your neighborhood, such as those living near a polluting facility? Members of a neighborhood organization?
3. Select where and how you will administer the survey to best reach your target (if virtually, how will you reach those that can’t or don’t use the internet for communications?).
4. Determine whether there are any supplementary materials (such as event flyers and factsheets) you want to distribute (virtually or in-person) to survey respondents.
5. Train volunteers to administer the survey. Ensure they understand the purpose of

the survey and the basics of the campaign, so they may be prepared to respond to questions.

6. Decide how you will summarize and discuss the survey's results, and how you will follow up with the people whose information was collected.

SAMPLE MOBILIZING MEETING AGENDA

A mobilizing meeting is an important tool towards educating community members around local issues and getting them ready to participate in your campaign!

GOAL	DETAILS
Welcome	Welcomes participants and explains the purpose of the meeting.
Get to know each other	Ask everyone to share their name and pronouns; where in the community they live, work, or move; their favorite thing about the community; their access needs, if any; and what or who brought them to the meeting. Optional: Do a fun icebreaker!
Get to know the issue	Pass around any campaign literature, connect community needs to broader zero waste frameworks, share why you're campaigning for zero waste, and explain why they need meeting participants to get involved.
Explore your community's assets	Ask participants to identify and discuss what assets exist in the community that could help build power, better manage discarded resources, and/or reduce waste at the source. To consider: individuals (people with relevant skills or interests - encourage participants to think about what they could contribute too!), associations (e.g. gardening clubs and block associations), institutions (e.g. local schools and nonprofits), physical spaces (e.g. parks and community centers), and culture (e.g. stories, customs, arts, and foods). If there's time, participants can discuss what outside resources and policies would help make the assets stronger.
Make the "ask"	Explain that it will take work to organize these assets to build zero waste in the community, and to secure the necessary supplementary resources and policy commitments from local governments. Ask each person if they will get involved with the campaign, collect contact information, and sign people up for any upcoming meetings, events, or actions.

PLANNING A TOXICS AND TREASURES TOUR

Toxics and Treasures Tours are often used to educate outside partners or government representatives, but they can also be a tool to help community members share stories with each other, develop a systematic analysis of local issues, and connect your zero waste campaign to the tangible neighborhood landscape.

Environmental justice organizers use toxic tours to:

- situate toxic sites in a community within larger frameworks of injustice while connecting these spaces to the personal stories of those impacted by them;
- celebrate local zero waste “treasures” (such as community gardens, repair shops, and second hand stores) and other sites of community resistance to environmental injustice; and
- identify potential sites of zero waste opportunity, such as schools, businesses, and empty lots.

HERE ARE SOME STEPS TO TAKE IN PLANNING YOUR OWN TOUR:



Look at a map and place pins on all the sites you want to include on your tour.



Map out a route between each destination - decide if you can cover them on foot or if a bus or van would be more practical.



Do some research and develop a tour script explaining the significance of each site within the larger context of environmental justice and zero waste.



Deepen your script’s power by asking community members to contribute personal stories linked to the spaces & issues you’re addressing in your tour.



Decide where you’ll say which parts of your script - what should be said in front of which stop? What can you say en route between destinations? If your tour will include local residents, factor in time for them to share their own thoughts and experiences.



Decide what message you want your overall script to send and tie it into a concrete “ask” to close the tour.

CASE STUDY



UNITED WORKERS AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP

In 2011, students at Baltimore’s Benjamin Franklin High School formed Free Your Voice, a student-led social justice organization. Baltimore has the highest rate of air pollution-related deaths in the country, and the Benjamin Franklin High School’s Curtis Bay neighborhood has the highest levels of toxic air pollution in the state of Maryland.^[1] With support from United Workers, a community-based human rights nonprofit, the students spent years researching and organizing to prevent what would have been the nation’s largest waste incinerator from being built less than a half-mile from their school. Those same students are now training the next generation of youth leaders from their former high school by supporting real-life organizing efforts. Under the guidance of United Workers, Baltimore youth initiated the planning process behind the city’s 2020 Fair Development Plan for Zero Waste. Most recently, youth leaders hosted a series of Research, Leadership, and Action days to build community among the residents, practitioners, and public officials and to start implementing their zero waste vision.

1 https://www.environmentalintegrity.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/2012-06_Final_Curtis_Bay.pdf

BUILDING COALITIONS FOR POWER

A coalition - the most common type of partnership between organizations - is a coordinated group of organizations working together towards a specific goal. They may disband after the goal is reached, or continue working together on consecutive goals. Coalitions often have a core group of active organizations that make decisions and drive the campaign forward, with other organizations playing various supportive roles. Establishing clear structures and protocols when initiating a coalition or any other partnership is crucial for generating successful working relationships and avoiding misunderstandings, inefficiencies, and other problems. Here are some questions you and your partners should consider:

- What is the purpose of this group? What is our shared vision? What are our goals?
- What are our shared values or group agreements?
- What will it take to make this group functional and resourceful?
- How will information be disseminated internally and externally?
- What is the leadership structure? How will leadership be selected?
- Will meetings require a facilitator?
- Does someone need to serve as the group's coordinator?
- How will decisions be made?
- What time commitment, areas of expertise, resources, networks, etc., can each organization contribute?
- Who can speak for the group?

- How often, when, and where will we meet?
- What time commitment can each participating group make?

ENGAGING UNIONS AND THE LABOR MOVEMENT

Unions often have political influence, but that's not the only reason why you should engage with them. Campaigns should be led by those most impacted by an issue, which means campaigns must involve workers. A successful relationship with labor can also help strengthen provisions for workers in the zero waste policies and programs your campaign will build, and strengthen implementation by having union buy-in.

Recycling sorters, collection drivers, and others in the waste system may already be organized in a local union. Even when a facility hires through temp agencies, you can often connect to the temporary workers through a union.

A union's political director is the individual responsible for leading a union's lobbying, legislative, and electoral efforts - if the union is large, you may be dealing with a regional political director. This person's approval is key to getting a union's support behind your campaign. However, it can be difficult to schedule a meeting with a political director, particularly at the onset of your zero waste campaign. Meeting with union staff (such as policy analysts and community liaisons) can bring your campaign closer to organizational decision makers. While organizing a union's

members can be perceived negatively by organizational leadership, strategically engaging shop stewards and rank-and-file members - a union's constituents - can help elevate your campaign's importance amongst staff and decision makers.

As with building collaboration with any other group, it's critical to ask questions about the union's (or local chapters) concerns, priorities, and aspirations for their members. Together, you might identify opportunities for joint organizing, seek ways to protect and create jobs in the waste system (see more in Chapter 5: Ensuring a Just Transition) and identify more ways to improve it together.

of Oakland and private recycling companies to implement an innovative community outreach program. In doing so, they found that residents were willing to pay extra to ensure fair labor practices once they understood the labor-intensive recycling process, underscoring how outreach efforts are crucial in securing public support for new initiatives.

CASE STUDY

A DIVERSE COALITION THAT CENTERS LABOR CONCERNS AND BUILDS A SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN TO IMPROVE RECYCLING IN ALAMEDA COUNTY

The Campaign for Sustainable Recycling in Alameda County, California, brought together a diverse coalition of labor, immigrant rights, community, faith, and environmental allies to improve recycling in the County. Together, they won increased wages and an improved health and safety training. This campaign was successful because a diversity of groups participated in the coalition and recycling workers visibly led the campaign (by educating allies and public officials, providing testimony, and using direct action tactics at their workplaces). Instead of targeting individual facilities, the coalition - with critical input from labor groups - devised "a long-term, broad-based" strategy to improve recycling and conditions for all recycling workers across the county. The campaign also worked with the City

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS TO INFLUENCE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Understanding the structure and functions of local government is helpful in gauging where power lies, and where you might find entry points for your campaign.

Although the details of a municipal government's organization will vary from place to place, a municipality's policy direction and budget is generally set by the Mayor, whose offices also coordinate policy implementation across local government. On the other hand, elected City Councilmembers have the power to approve the Mayoral budget and enact local laws. City Councils may also pass resolutions to influence policy on issues that may be out of municipal jurisdiction, such as preemption laws, bottle bills, and producer responsibility requirements. Councilmembers sit on Committees that consider laws and policies related to specific topics, such as Solid Waste Management, Environmental Protection, and Health. Such committees are responsible for recommending and hosting hearings for laws for the whole Council to discuss and vote upon. Committees may also hold oversight hearings, where Councilmembers question relevant officials about the quality and performance of municipal programs and hear testimony from advocates, experts, and public stakeholders. Meanwhile, various municipal departments and agencies carry out the day-to-day governmental operations and implement local laws. They are often headed by individuals appointed by the Mayor.

WORKING WITH AN "INSIDE" CHAMPION

Cultivating meaningful relationships with public employees who can champion your cause and serve as zero waste advocates within local government can be greatly helpful in successfully passing and implementing zero waste policies. These individuals may be city councilmembers with a track record of supporting community-led initiatives, or those passionate about environmental issues. It might also be a sustainability coordinator in the Mayor's office, or a staff member in the Department of Sanitation. To identify the right individual, ask around to see if people in your community have relationships with local public officials and staff. Make a shortlist of those who have common interests and values, or established connections to community members involved with your campaign.

While it's useful to build relationships with elected officials and political appointees, don't overlook the power of their staff! These individuals are more likely to be able to meet with you and participate in your meetings. They also have influence over policy details, and can help you reach key decision makers. Moreover, agency and department staff do not turnover as elected administrations change, providing continuity as zero waste policies are implemented.

Once you identify and approach your inside champion, meet with them often to share updates on your grassroots efforts and campaign progress. Your government champion

can provide helpful insider knowledge, including what support and opposition your campaign should expect from public officials and agencies and which key individuals you should plan to meet with. They can also help you assess what factors might influence your campaign's success, such as upcoming elections, state-level policies, budgetary allocations, mayoral priorities, contract renewals, and adjacent hot-button issues or policies under consideration.

Tip: When approaching public officials, be sure to frame your case for zero waste arguments around what would draw them to this issue, not just what appeals to you and your group. Spend some researching background knowledge on what they care about - personalizing your argument can help you make allies!

ZERO WASTE CAMPAIGN PLANNING

A zero waste campaign plan helps organized communities ensure that their efforts are efficient and strategic, particularly when working in alliances of multiple groups.

CAMPAIGN PLANNING TEMPLATE

COMPONENT	MEANING	EXAMPLE(S)
Goal	An agreed-upon common “big picture” goal – what is the main objective of your campaign?	Zero waste to landfills and incinerators by 2040.
Demand	A clear, targeted demand - or a few related demands - that refer to the specific policies and programs you want to implement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement citywide recycling and organics collection. • Shut down the local incinerator. • Provide good jobs for laid-off incinerator workers.
Primary target	The individual(s) who can give you what you want. Everyone involved with your campaign should agree and understand who your target is and why.	The Mayor
Strategy	The coordinated ways you use your power to win your demands and build power in your community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build community support for zero waste. • Gain media coverage to educate the public and pressure targets. • Have the city council draft and adopt zero waste bills.
Objectives	The steps that you need to take in order to reach your goal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure a champion within the local government. • Co-host a zero waste town hall with elected officials. • City Councilmember introduces a zero waste bill.

COMPONENT	MEANING	EXAMPLE(S)
Message	A short, 3-5 sentence statement rooted in shared values that addresses zero waste and can be altered for different audiences. This can be further developed and refined throughout your campaign.	This city's practices of sending our waste to landfills and incinerators is not compatible with our city's values of sustainability, health, and justice. The city must adopt legislation to reduce waste at the source while expanding access to recycling and composting. Zero waste is the path forward and will help our city meet our climate goals; cut down on pollution to improve public health; and create good, local jobs.
Actions	Collective shows of power that aim to move your target. At this point, you should have a rough idea of what type of action you want to execute, and when/where they will take place.	Host a zero waste rally on Earth Day; perform street theater in a popular public space.
Tactics	The specific things your campaign does to engage decision makers and achieve your goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send letters to the secondary target; • Write letters to the editor of the local newspaper; • Coordinate a series of lobby days.

As you carry out your campaigns, we encourage you to share resources with us (for example, meeting activities, slideshows, pamphlets, direct action ideas, and zero waste plan proposals) so other organizers can learn from you. All of our campaigns are stronger together!

GAIA members can also ask questions, share calls to action, and more on the GAIA US/Canada and GAIA Global listservs.

For more information on becoming a GAIA member, visit <https://www.no-burn.org/join-gaia>.

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